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File Code: 3420 **Date:** October 20, 2004
Route To:

Subject: Proposed FY 2005 Los Griegos II Forest Health Project, Jemez Ranger District (jemezrd)

To: Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest

The FY 2005 Los Griegos II Forest Health project would mechanically treat 120 acres directly adjacent to the 250+ acre area included in the FY 2004 Forest Health project (see our 3420 letter of November 3, 2003). These areas are part of the 1,871 acre Los Griegos WUI located near the Sierra los Pinos community in the Jemez Mountains.

Dave Conklin of our staff and Andy Vigil (zone silviculturist) last visited the Los Griegos area on July 30 of this year. At that time, they examined the marking completed within the FY 2004 portion of the project area and made walkthroughs in several additional stands included in the WUI. Andy has since delineated the 120 acre tract included in the FY 2005 proposal. Dave re-examined this area on October 19 in order to provide a better description of stand conditions and treatment needs.

In general, stand conditions are more variable and complex in FY 05 area than in the FY 04 area. While the 04 project area was nearly pure ponderosa pine, the new area contains a significant amount of mixed conifer, along with some sizable aspen clones. As in the 04 area, ponderosa pine dwarf mistletoe infection is widespread, with "infection centers" comprising at least half the total area. Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe is also common here, affecting at least one-third of the host type. Relatively high levels of mistletoe, dense stand conditions, and drought have resulted in a significant amount of bark beetle activity and tree mortality here over the past 2-3 years.

This is a dense, multi-aged forest with basal areas ranging from 120 to 200 ft^2 in most areas. Site quality is good, with estimated site indexes ranging from 80 to 100. The last commercial entry here (based on stump condition) was at least 50 to 60 years ago. In most of the area, the understories were thinned to 5-6 foot average spacing approximately 30 years ago; however, about 20 acres in the northeast corner of the unit were not thinned. Considerable regeneration has occurred since the last thinning; dense sapling thickets are common. High fuel-loading (down woody material and heavy accumulation of needles) adds to the challenge of treating this area effectively.

The proposed low-thinning (which would remove sawtimber as well as thin the smaller size classes) should reduce basal areas by one-third to one-half throughout most of the unit and greatly reduce ladder fuels. Most of the moderately to heavily infected (DMR 3-6) trees would be removed. All visibly infected trees (both pine and Douglas-fir) less than 5" dbh should be cut. Within some of the mistletoe-infected areas, there are opportunities to favor "non-host" species. For example, some areas with heavy pine mistletoe have relatively healthy Douglas-fir

and/or white fir. A few areas with heavy Douglas-fir mistletoe have healthy pine and/or white fir that can be retained.

Because treating a forest in this condition will generate large amounts of slash (adding to the existing accumulation of ground fuels), we think that machine mastication may be the best option to insure that this project meets its objective of reducing fire-hazard. Please contact us if you have questions about this evaluation or need additional assistance with this project.

/s/ David A. Conklin (for)
DEBRA ALLEN-REID
New Mexico Zone Leader, Forest Health

cc: John F Peterson, Leonard Lucero, John Anhold, Andy Vigil